

Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
Monday, February 27, 2023

House Bill 5673: AN ACT CONCERNING THE REFORMATION OF CERTAIN TAXES AND TAX EQUITY - Support

Senator Fonfara, Representative Horn, Senator Marin, Representative Cheeseman, and members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee:

My name is Travis Woodward, I am a resident of Hamden, and an engineer for the Connecticut Department of Transportation. I am also the president of CSEA SEIU Local 2001, a labor union representing over 25,000 state, municipal, board of education, active and retired, public and private sector workers. I offer the following testimony in support of House Bill 5673:

Connecticut might be the wealthiest state in the country, but we also lead the nation in income inequality. This contradiction leaves too many of our state's working people to deal with education gaps, health disparities, unattainable home ownership, limited to no access to entrepreneurial investment capital, and other hardships. Connecticut can and should be a place where every family has what we need to live a good life.

There is an old saying in the Labor Movement which says that every person deserves "Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest and eight hours for what you will." But when you're working two or three jobs to make ends meet, you don't have much time for what you will or sleep, for that matter. In a state with millionaires, billionaires and highly profitable large corporations there should not be hundreds of thousands of working people struggling to raise families.

For too long, state budgets have underfunded the programs and services our residents need—taking resources away from our communities. Did you know that in the last 20 years, due to layoffs, privatization, and attrition, our state workforce has shrunk by over 20%? On top of that, there has been a 7.6% decrease in Connecticut public employees (excluding the education sector) over the course of the pandemic. And, that's before we even get to the 4,500 state employee retirements we've seen since the start of 2022. Now is the time to support Connecticut residents by ensuring they have access to the services they need.

I'm asking you to level the playing field and make things a little easier for working people. Make the critical investments we need in essential public services, education, health care, housing, and municipal aid. By supporting HB 5673, you can start to build a future where all residents, not just the wealthy few, have the resources they need to survive and thrive. The challenges we currently face are even greater than what we lived through in 2008 with the Great Recession. We must take bold action now, or risk damaging our economy for years.

The bill before you offers a sensible response to the budgetary and economic crisis facing working people. Narrowly focused proposals to restore fairness to the tax code, fund essential services, and jumpstart economic recovery are the common sense solutions we need. I urge you to support House Bill 5673.

I would like to thank you for hearing my testimony.

Travis Woodward, P.E.
President, CSEA SEIU Local 2001